

Ministry Manual for Pastors



Stephen Gibson
keystoneui@att.net

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Introduction to the Pastors' Manual

This manual may be used by a church or association of churches for the establishment ministry policies and practices.

The manual provides standards of pastoral ethics and ministry training for the purpose of guiding a pastor's development and giving credibility to the pastor's leadership. The manual provides a plan for ordination.

This manual provides the local church with a statement of doctrine, standard of Christian conduct, and description of best practices of worship and church life for the purpose of guiding the church to fulfil its mission.

Ministry Philosophy and Style

Servant Leadership

Jesus came to serve, and he said, "As the Father sent me, so I am sending you" (John 20:21). Jesus is a model of servant leadership. Pastors should seek to serve their congregations and community. Pastors should not seek to be performers or celebrities. Pastors should not ask for honors from their church, but humbly accept honors that are given voluntarily.

Simple Worship

We encourage simplicity in worship. The essential activities of the church include worship, study of the Scripture, fellowship, discipleship, care of the family of faith, and service to the community. Elaborate buildings, ceremonies, musical instruments, talented performances, and special dress may honor God and show the importance of worship but should not be overemphasized or considered necessary. People should never feel that they are not welcome in the church because they are unable to dress well.

Spiritual Worship

The pastor and his ministry team should lead the congregation to worship God in spirit and truth. Human beings may naturally express joy and respond to God's presence emotionally and physically, but the emphasis of worship should be honoring God rather than causing human experience for its own sake. Any behavior that is sensual or self-honoring is not appropriate for worship and should be corrected by the pastor.

Christian Unity

We accept as Christians people who believe the doctrines essential to salvation, testify to conversion and spiritual life, and demonstrate obedience to God's Word. While each local church must agree on some details of doctrine and practice in order to worship together and cooperate in ministry, we realize that other Christians who love God and submit to the authority of the Bible sincerely interpret and apply Scripture differently.

Training and Discipleship

We strongly urge every pastor to continue to study and develop. A pastor's ministry is strengthened by his ability to teach and explain biblical truth. We recommend the courses from Shepherds Global Classroom, available for free download at ShepherdsGlobal.org. A pastor can learn by individual study or by leading the study of a group in his church.

A pastor should constantly develop and extend the ministry team by providing training and practice.

The pastor and other available teachers should work systematically to disciple the believers in the congregation in groups outside of the worship services. A series of discipleship lessons called *Cultivate Discipleship Lessons* is available from Shepherds Global Classroom.

Association Membership

To become a member of the Association, a pastor or person preparing for pastoral ministry should study this Manual and affirm that he agrees and supports the doctrines and standards for ministry described. He should complete and submit the Application for Membership at the end of this Manual.

Membership does not mean that the pastor is licensed by the Association. Membership means that the pastor is in the process to be licensed and ordained. Membership is renewed yearly at the conference. The committee may decide not to renew the membership of a pastor if his behavior or doctrine is not consistent with the standards of the Association or if he does not seem to be making progress toward fulfilling the requirements of licensing.

Pastor Licensing Requirements

Pastor licensing requirements include the following: (1) The pastor must have a well-verified history of Christian behavior, faithful ministry, and good doctrine, (2) The pastor must be in a ministry position and engaged in regular ministry in a local church, (3) The pastor should have at least two years of regular ministry in a local church, with a good report from those whom he served, (4) The pastor must commit to the ethics and doctrines described in the Manual, (5) The pastor must study and complete the assignments for the

courses *Christian Beliefs* and *Doctrine and Practice of the Church* from Shepherds Global Classroom, and (6) The pastor must be approved for licensing in a process conducted by appointed Association representatives.

For licensing, it is not necessary that the pastor be the senior pastor of his church.

Pastors who want to become licensed members of the Association should schedule a meeting with the application committee. A candidate should bring the completed Annual Pastor's Report provided at the end of this Manual, a letter of recommendation from his church signed by all board members, and a letter of recommendation from a pastor known to the Association.

The application committee will approve candidates to attend the next pastors' conference. Candidates will be responsible for their own expenses of attending the conference. At the conference, candidates approved in a final interview will receive licenses. Candidates should become familiar with this Manual before their interview at the conference.

The pastor's license is issued annually. The pastor should attend the annual conference and provide a written ministry report before the renewal of his license. A reporting form is provided at the end of this Manual.

Pastor Ordination Requirements

A pastor to be ordained should meet the requirements of Association licensing and also have four years of active and effective ministry (not necessarily as senior pastor) and complete specified courses from Shepherds Global Classroom. Pastors previously ordained may be affirmed as ordained if they meet all requirements and had institute training similar to the SGC courses. If previously ordained, a pastor joining the Association does not need to be ordained again.

The pastor to be ordained must study and complete the assignments for the courses *Biblical Evangelism and Discipleship*, *Ministry Leadership*, *Practical Christian Living*, *Christian Family*, and *Principles of Biblical Interpretation* from Shepherds Global Classroom.

Ordination is permanent and does not require renewal, but the association may revoke the membership of any pastor whose character, behavior, or doctrine do not honor God and support the requirements of this Manual.

The ordained pastor continues to receive an annually renewed license that signifies his membership in the Association. The pastor should attend the annual conference and provide a written ministry report before the renewal of his license. A reporting form is provided at the end of this Manual.

Financial Policies

We try to follow the examples of ministry in the New Testament. The Apostle Paul did not provide financial support for the pastors that he appointed or for church construction.

We believe that the local church is blessed and empowered by God to fulfill its ministry. The members of the local church should work and give to support their pastor, care for the needs of each other, and enable the local ministries of their church. No church or pastor should join the Association with expectation of financial support from the Association.

A pastor should serve because of love and obedience to his calling from God. Though people should support the pastor who serves them, a pastor should not require money for his ministry. A pastor should not charge a fee for an act of ministry. A pastor should never profit dishonestly either from church money or personal business.

When Jesus sent his disciples to minister, he said, "You received without paying; give without pay" (Matthew 10:8). It is wrong to put a price on ministry. One of the strongest rebukes in the Bible was given to a man who offered to pay for a spiritual power so that he could make a profit from it (Acts 8:18-23).

A pastor should earn the trust and respect of the congregation and community by serving faithfully and being accountable with all church money. People of the world do not respect the church or pastor when they seem to be motivated by profit.

Doctrinal Statement

The Association serves as a fellowship for churches that respect the authority of the Bible and hold historical, Trinitarian, evangelical doctrines. The term historical refers to the doctrines of the early church expressed in the Nicene and Chalcedonian creeds. The term Trinitarian refers to the doctrines of the Trinity and the doctrines of the personhood and deity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The term evangelical refers to the absolute authority of the Bible, salvation by grace through faith, and the necessity of conversion.

We believe that churches are wrong to emphasize new doctrines based either on new revelations or new interpretations of Scripture that were never believed in the early church.

We believe that when the Apostle Paul told the church to "Be of one mind" (Philippians 2:2) he did not expect them to have the same opinion about every detail, because he also said that believers should accept one another in spite of different beliefs and practices (Romans 14:1-10).

Therefore, this Manual avoids denominational distinctives that would prevent fellowship and cooperation among evangelical churches. Some variety of practices and details of

belief should be tolerated among believers, but we expect that Association members will believe and defend the following doctrines.

The Bible is the Word of God. God inspired the writers so that they wrote without error. The Bible includes everything that we need to know in order to be saved from sin and to walk in relationship with God. The Bible is the primary source of our doctrine and is the final authority. The Christian should study the Bible daily to know God better, to be guided, and to be spiritually fed.

There is one God, who created the universe and is Lord of all. He is an eternal, unchanging Spirit. He is all-powerful, all-knowing, and present everywhere. He is absolutely holy in his character and righteous in all that he does. He blesses his creation and loves every person, offering forgiveness and relationship with himself.

God is a Trinity, one God in three persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The three are different in role, but identical in nature and equal in attributes of divinity and worthy of worship.

Humans are created in the image of God for the purpose of loving and worshipping God. God designed them for their purpose with abilities to think, communicate, and love. A person has a moral sense, a personal will, and an immortal spirit. God's grace gives a person the power to make free decisions. Every human life has eternal and infinite value.

Sin originated from the free decision of the first created people to disobey God. All people except Jesus have inherited the depravity of Adam and are also guilty of actions of sin. Every sinner will be eternally condemned if he does not find God's forgiveness before the final judgment.

God created all spirits. The holy angels worship God and protect believers. Angels are immortal, personal beings who can speak, worship, and reason. They have made moral choices. Satan and other angels fell into sin and are enemies of God and man. God limits the power of Satan and has condemned him to eternal punishment.

Jesus is the Messiah and Lord of all, the Son of God born of a virgin, with all of human nature and all of divine nature in one person. He lived a sinless life and died as a sacrifice so that our sins can be forgiven. He rose from the dead and will raise all believers when he returns. His kingdom is universal and without end.

The life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ provide atonement for the sins of the world. Every person is guilty of sin and powerless to save himself. Every sinner who repents can receive God's grace by faith. The believer is forgiven and delivered from sin's power and punishment. Every believer should depend on the power of the Holy Spirit in order to live in daily victory over sin. Creation in general is redeemed and will ultimately be restored by God.

The Holy Spirit is the third Person of the Trinity, fully divine with the Father and Son. He convicts of sin, regenerates, and lives in every believer. The Holy Spirit gives the believer

victory over sin. He is the unifying life of the church, which he blesses with the fruit of the Spirit and spiritual gifts for ministry.

Christian holiness begins when a sinner repents and is transformed by God's grace. The believer grows spiritually as he grows in his understanding of God's will and continues to obey. Entire sanctification is the work of God in which he cleanses the believer of inherited depravity after conversion.

Christ has built one holy, world-wide church, expressed as the body of Christ in local congregations. The church holds the doctrines of the apostles and defends all truth. The church is the family of God, with fellowship that ministers to all needs. The church worships God, evangelizes the world, and disciples believers.

The local church is a group of believers that functions as a spiritual family and community of faith; offering the gospel and the fellowship of the church to all who repent; practicing baptism and communion; cooperating in worship, fellowship, evangelism, and discipleship; accomplishing the work of the body of Christ by the gifts of the Holy Spirit; submitted to the Word of God; with unity based on biblical doctrine, the experience of grace, and the life of the Spirit.

Every person will exist eternally either in heaven or hell. Heaven is God's home where believers will live with God, joyfully worshipping him. In heaven is no sin, nor any of the suffering that results from it. Hell is the eternal, irrevocable, and agonizing place of punishment for all who have not been saved from their sins by Christ. Hell is the just punishment for willful sin against an infinite God.

Jesus will return as he promised, resurrecting believers of the past and taking all believers to reign in his kingdom. Every person will be raised from the dead to face judgment for his works, then be either granted eternal reward or sentenced to eternal punishment. God's kingdom will come fully, and God will reign eternally.

Christian Behavior

Jesus said that his disciples would show their love for him by obeying him (John 14:15). We know that we are saved by grace, not by our obedience (Ephesians 2:8-9), but the call to salvation is a call to holiness (1 Thessalonians 4:7).

A person should not have a concept of grace that excuses sin, because grace shows us that we should live righteously in this present world (Titus 2:11).

The Bible tells us that the behavior of Christians should be consistent with their relationship with God (Colossians 1:10, Ephesians 4:1). Any person who uses the name of Christ should leave sin (2 Timothy 2:19).

Several verses of Scripture specify sins that indicate that a person has not been saved. A person that hates another does not have eternal life (1 John 3:15). The Apostle Paul listed several kinds of sinners that will not inherit the kingdom of God and said that the Corinthian believers had been cleansed from those sins (1 Corinthians 6:9-11).

Because of the biblical emphasis of righteous living, this Manual gives some details of Christian living.

A Christian practices honesty, not lying (Ephesians 4:25), not stealing (Ephesians 4:28), working faithfully (Colossians 3:23), not deceiving for profit (Proverbs 11:1), and not refusing to pay debts (Psalm 37:21).

Sexual activity outside of marriage is wrong (Hebrews 13:4). Marriage is a lifelong covenant between a man and a woman (Genesis 2:24). Homosexual activity is wrong (Romans 1:27). A person should not try to change gender in appearance or behavior (Deuteronomy 22:5). Pornography is wrong (Psalm 101:3).

Because of God's standard for marriage and sexual behavior, a Christian should not interact or behave in a way that shows interest or willingness to do wrong. A Christian should not use entertainment that is designed to appeal to lustful desires. A Christian should not dress in a way that is likely to cause wrong desires in others. A Christian should have a lifestyle that is different from society that is not based on biblical values.

A man and woman should not live together in a relationship without being married. Rather than living together unmarried and waiting until they can afford an expensive traditional wedding, a couple should go ahead and have a simple church wedding and do the legal documents.

A Christian will avoid environments of entertainment where he is likely to join others in behaviors such as dancing, gambling, and drinking alcohol (Ephesians 5:11).

A Christian should refuse addictive substances that are harmful to health such as alcohol, illegal drugs, and tobacco in any form (1 Corinthians 6:12).

A Christian should speak kindly to others (Colossians 4:6). We are not to speak hatefully to others even if they treat us badly (1 Peter 3:9, Titus 3:2-3). A Christian should not use God's name as an exclamation without reverence (Exodus 20:7).

A Christian should be faithful to attend the worship services of the church (Hebrews 10:25). A Christian should financially support those who serve him spiritually (Galatians 6:6).

Ministry Positions in the Church

The position of deacon was instituted in Acts 6:1-7. The work of the deacons was to manage resources of the church and care for the congregation. Preaching was not a necessary part of the deacon's ministry, but some of them were preachers. The qualifications were that they were honest, and were filled with the Holy Spirit, and had wisdom. Further qualifications are listed in 1 Timothy 3:8-12.

Other positions in the church may include worship leaders, Bible teachers, youth and children's leaders, and others. It is important for a person who fills any position to be a good example of the Christian life and testimony that the church teaches.

Tithe

The Original Purposes of Tithe

The Old Testament priesthood was supported by tithes (Numbers 18:20-21). The Levites, the tribe of the priests, were not given a share of the land (Deuteronomy 18:1-4). They were supposed to be financially supported for their ministry in the temple.

Tithe was used to support the temple worship and those responsible for it. God's plan was for the Levites to focus on ministry and not have to be involved in business. One sign of the decline of worship was when the Levites were not receiving offerings and had to leave their ministries to go work in the fields (Nehemiah 13:10).

Tithe was also used for feasts for the worship community, to which the poor were invited (Deuteronomy 12:17-18, 14:22-29). Tithe was used to help the poor, the widows, and foreign immigrants (Deuteronomy 26:12).

After they knew they had given their tithe faithfully, they could pray for God's blessings (Deuteronomy 26:12-15). To fail to give the tithe is robbing God. Tithing into "God's storehouse" will bring an uncontainable blessing (Malachi 3:8-10).

Modern Relevance of Tithe

How do we know that tithing is still God's plan for the support of ministry and not just an Old Testament requirement?

(1) Abraham gave tithe to Melchisedek long before the law of Moses was given for Israel. This shows that it was a general principle before Moses. Tithing did not start with the Old Testament law, it was a principle from the beginning (Genesis 14:20, Hebrews 7:4).

(2) Jacob promised to tithe to God (Genesis 28:20-22), even though the law of Moses was not given yet. Jacob knew that it was already a principle of giving to God.

(3) Jesus affirmed tithing and did not say it was only for a past time (Matthew 23:23).

(4) Paul told church members to give “on the first day of the week” as they had prospered (1 Corinthians 16:2). Therefore, they were to give in proportion to what they received. The Old Testament guideline of ten percent shows us what God considers a reasonable proportion to be. There is no reason to think that God’s opinion has changed.

(5) God still plans for those who are in full-time ministry to be supported financially by their ministry. “Those who preach the gospel should live of the gospel.” He did not plan for pastors to work and support themselves and not have time to devote to their ministry. 1 Corinthians 9:11-14 says that the person giving spiritual benefits should receive financial benefits from those he serves. 2 Corinthians 12:13 shows that churches usually supported Paul financially while he ministered to them.

Church Policies for Tithe

Tithing should be expected of those who are committed members of the church.

The church should not teach about tithing to people who are not saved.

A person who comes to the church for the first time should never feel that he is obligated to give money to the church.

A church should not try to collect tithes from people who are visiting the church and have not yet committed to the church.

The church should make sure that people do not think that paying tithe is part of salvation. Nobody should think that tithe will help a person get saved.

The church should minister to the congregation and the community without requiring payment.

All members should know how the money of the church is used. The church should follow careful procedures of managing the money so that everyone knows that it is done honestly.

Tithe does not belong to the pastor alone. Tithe is supposed to support the ministry of the church. However, supporting the pastor should be a priority of the church.

Financial Accountability in the Local Church

It is important to have financial accountability in the local church. The Apostle Paul set an example for us. When he was collecting money from one church to take to another, he had witnesses and made sure that nothing was done secretly (2 Corinthians 8:20-21).

People of the world distrust people who manage money. They assume that many people steal from the money they manage. They believe that many pastors serve only for money.

It is important for the local church to have a system for financial accountability that proves that their pastor can be trusted.

For financial accountability, offerings should be collected and counted by several people, not just one. Someone besides the pastor or a member of his family should keep a record of how the money is spent.

Some pastors teach that all the tithe belongs to them. The Bible does not teach that all tithe should go to the pastor. Tithe was used for several purposes (Deuteronomy 26:12).

The pastor should help administrate the use of the tithes and offerings to take care of the ministry of the church. The congregation will be willing to give more if they see faithful use of the offerings.

Church Discipline

The Apostle Paul gave directions for church discipline for a specific case in the Corinthian church (1 Corinthians 5). Paul told them that church discipline is not for people who are outside the church, but for members (11-12). Likewise, church discipline is not for people who visit the church but do not profess to be converted, do not become members, and hold no position.

If a person who is called a brother is committing sins like those listed in verse 11, the church must make sure the person realizes that he is not a Christian and that the community knows that this person is not part of the church. The church was to take action in unity ("when you are assembled"). They were to remove this person from their fellowship. This includes removing him from any position in the church. He cannot be served communion because that implies Christian fellowship.

Paul implied two goals of church discipline. One goal is that the church be kept pure (6-7). It is impossible for a church to be in unity if members are in sin. A second goal is to bring the sinner back to salvation ("that his spirit may be saved"). If the church continues to accept him as a member while he continues to sin, he will think he is all right and is not likely to repent. He is more likely to repent if the church discipline happens.

When a person asks to join the church, the pastor should inquire about previous church membership. If the person was a member of another church, he should bring a letter of recommendation from his previous pastor. If he is unable to bring a letter, the pastor should contact the previous pastor to make sure the person was not under church discipline. If there was unresolved conflict, the pastor should seek a resolution before accepting the person into membership.

This Manual describes Christian doctrine and behavior that should be followed by all believers. It does not emphasize the details of doctrine that often distinguish some evangelical believers from others. Therefore, this Manual can be used as a standard of Christian doctrine and behavior.

A church member who persistently argues against the doctrines or violates the standard of behavior should be corrected by the church. Matthew 18:15-17 describes the procedure of correction when a person does wrong against another individual. The procedure of correction by the church should be similar. (1) A leader should talk to the person who is doing wrong. If he refuses correction, (2) Two or three believers should talk to him together. If he still refuses correction, (3) The members of the church should meet together and try to correct the person. If he still refuses correction, (4) The church should consider him an unbeliever and remove him from membership.

A pastor that excuses wrong doctrine or sinful behavior and fails to follow the Manual cannot continue in the Association. A pastor who realizes that he cannot sincerely follow this Manual should not renew his license with the Association. After fair examination, the administration of the Association will not renew the license of a pastor who does not follow the doctrines and behavior of the Manual. In some cases, the administration may allow a trial period for a pastor who is willing to be corrected.

A Format for Worship Services

The Bible shows the value of planning for worship. From the careful preparation of musicians for Temple worship to Paul's directions regarding worship for the church at Corinth, scripture shows that planning is important for leading in ministry. Since worship is our sacrifice to God, God deserves our best offering.

God calls his worshippers to have clean hands and pure hearts. Before preparing the worship service, we should prepare ourselves spiritually. Begin worship planning with prayer and scripture reading. Spend time in God's Word for your own spiritual development.

Before choosing scriptures and songs that speak God's Word to the congregation, take time to let God's Word and God's Spirit speak to you. Then as you begin planning for Sunday's service, ask God to guide you to the scriptures, sermon topic, and music that will speak to the needs of the people.

Below is a format for a worship service. It is not necessary for the pastor to lead each part. It is good to develop several people in the church that can lead various parts of the service. Using several leaders in the service gives variety for the listeners and develops the leaders by giving them experience.

It is not necessary to follow the format strictly. Extra prayers, testimonies, or songs can be added to this format if desired. Special things like a baby dedication or communion can be added, and the pastor should adjust the time of other things so that the service is not too long.

Many churches welcome spontaneous participation by people in the congregation. For example, a person may want to share a testimony or sing a song that was not planned.

It is good to have freedom in the worship service. The Holy Spirit may prompt someone to do something in the service if freedom is allowed. However, the pastor should not allow freedom to become disorder. The pastor should not allow people to take control of the service, frequently waste time, or share something that is harmful or confusing. In some cases, the pastor should kindly stop the person who is interrupting. In the case of a person who frequently wastes time in the service, the pastor may talk to him at a different time to ask for a change of behavior. The pastor should not let one person's impulses cause the service to fail to meet the needs of everyone else.

The Service Format

Welcome

Someone begins the service with words like "Welcome to Bethel Church. Thank you for joining us for worship today. I hope you are encouraged as we worship and hear from God's Word together."

Opening Prayer

Someone leads in a short prayer expressing praise and worship to God then asking for His blessing and for the work of His Spirit in the service.

Congregational Singing

Someone leads the congregation to sing together.

Bible Passage

Someone should read a Bible passage for the congregation. An option is to have the congregation read together. The passage can relate to the sermon or be unrelated. The reader does not need to make any comments on the passage. The purpose is to bless the people with God's Word.

Pastoral Prayer / Congregational Prayer

On Sunday morning, the pastor should lead in prayer. His prayer should include a time of special praise to God, needs of people in the congregation, any special situations, the ministry and outreach of the church, the needs of the community, and affirmation of faith in God's love and care for His people.

In other services, the pastor may ask another person to lead the congregation in prayer.

Offering

The offering time should be positive and joyful. Nothing should be said to make visitors feel obligated to give. Someone should thank the congregation for supporting of the ministry of the church. A leader could share about something that has been accomplished

by their giving. If the leader often strongly urges people to give more, that is a sign of leadership that is failing to build the commitment of the members.

Announcements

Special events and needed information can be given at this time. This should be done as briefly as possible, unless description of events can build the feeling of fellowship among the people. For example, telling about a good Bible study or fellowship event can help the people feel connected.

Special Songs

Singing by individuals, groups, or a choir could happen at this time. The goal is to build a feeling of worship in preparation for the preaching. These songs should be arranged ahead of time so that the singers practice and prepare.

Preaching

The pastor or a visiting preacher delivers a sermon.

Congregational Song

It is good if the last song can relate to the subject of the sermon.

Baptism Doctrine and Ceremony

Teaching in Preparation for Baptism

The pastor should make sure that the candidate for baptism testifies to conversion through saving faith and that the candidate demonstrates a changed life with repentance of sin and an attitude of obedience to God. A person should not be baptized on the basis of mental understanding of doctrine or because he has grown up in a Christian family.

If the church practices baptism that does not include church membership, the candidate for baptism should be thoroughly taught the sections of this Manual entitled "Doctrinal Statement," "Christian Behavior," and "Baptism Doctrine and Ceremony" with sufficient discussion to show that the candidate understands.

A candidate who is becoming a member of the church should also be taught the sections in the Manual entitled "Ministry Positions in the Church," "Tithe," "Financial Accountability in the Local Church," and "Church Discipline."

The Meaning of Baptism

Since the beginning, the church has practiced baptism as the public testimony that a sinner has repented and entered the fellowship of believers.

For most people, baptism is not the moment when they become Christians. A repenting sinner is saved the moment he puts his faith in Christ. After being saved, he should obey the command to be baptized as a demonstration of his new life of obedience to Jesus as Lord. There are some people who are exceptions, because it was at the time of baptism that they put their faith in Christ and experienced conversion. But ordinarily, baptism is the testimony that conversion has already happened.

The Bible tells us that baptism symbolizes the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. When a believer is baptized he testifies that he is connecting with the atonement provided by Christ. The apostle even used the statement that we are "baptized into Christ Jesus."

In salvation we receive the benefits of Christ's death, but in a special sense we also share in His death. Jesus died because of sin, not His sin, but the sins of the world. Likewise, in salvation we die to sin because we repent of it and leave it.

In salvation we share in Jesus' resurrection. Just as He rose from the dead, we begin a new life at the time when we die to sin. We begin a life of victory and freedom from sin.

The Issue of Time

In the New Testament, converts were baptized immediately. Baptism did not represent a level of maturity or knowledge; it testified to conversion. Baptism should happen soon

after conversion. To wait seems to imply that we don't know if a person is truly converted. It shows doubt in his testimony, which could cause him to become weak in his own faith.

If a person does not seem to understand the gospel and does not demonstrate a transformation by grace, he should not be baptized. If he does have those qualifications, he should be baptized soon as a means of strengthening his faith.

A Form for Baptism

The converts to be baptized should stand together to be shown to the people who are there to watch. As the crowd comes together, someone could lead them in singing for a few minutes.

Someone could read Matthew 28:18-20.

The pastor should ask each convert, "[name], do you testify that you have repented of sin and trusted in Christ for salvation? Do you commit to a new life of obedience to God?" The convert should answer, "I do."

The pastor should speak to the crowd and say, "These to be baptized today have testified to repentance and faith in Christ. As baptism represents the death and resurrection of Jesus, these believers testify by baptism that they have died to sin and now live for God. They have begun a new life in obedience to God."

Then the pastor should lead the church in prayer for the converts. His prayer should include statements like these: "Lord, we thank you for your grace that brought these to salvation and spiritual life. We pray for the continued work of the Holy Spirit in their lives. Make them witnesses to their community and a blessing to the church."

The converts should individually go into the water to the pastor. Before baptizing each, he should say, "I baptize you in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit."

After the baptism, the congregation could sing a hymn together. Someone could lead in another short prayer.

Communion Doctrine and Ceremony

At Jesus' last Passover meal with the disciples, He said that the bread was His body and the wine was His blood. He was speaking of that fact that He would give His life for their salvation. Hebrews 10:1-10 tells us that the Old Testament sacrifices were symbols of the atonement that Jesus would provide.

Jesus used bread and wine when he instituted the custom of communion. Bread was the most basic food, as it has been in many parts of the world. Bread not only represents food in general, but also represents life, because food is necessary for life. Wine was a common drink at that time. Grape juice was called wine in the New Testament whether it was fresh or fermented; therefore, it is not necessary to use alcoholic wine in order to follow Jesus' direction.

When Jesus served the Passover to His disciples, He said, "This is my body . . . this is my blood." Jesus was still standing there, physically present with them. His body and blood had not yet been given in sacrifice. It seems clear that He meant that the bread and wine were symbolic of His body and blood, and not literally His body and blood. The bread and wine used in communion should be considered the same.

Communion is an act of worship symbolizing the death of Christ for us. God has designed communion to be a form of worship and a means of strengthening our faith to receive grace. If a person takes it without faith, it does not automatically bring grace to him. If a person takes it without reverence for its meaning, he brings condemnation upon himself (1 Corinthians 11:27-29).

Like baptism, communion is something Jesus told us to do, but it is not something that saves us. Communion is an act of worship and faith.

In 1 Corinthians 11:20-34, Paul reviewed the manner that Jesus instituted the custom for the church. He corrected the wrong practices of the Corinthian church.

Paul said that a person should examine himself to make sure he does not take communion "unworthily." The apostle was talking about the manner of taking communion. A person is condemned if he takes it in an irreverent, careless manner.

The service should be done in a quiet and orderly way. It is a time for meditating on the sacrifice of Jesus that was given for our salvation.

A person who is living in obvious sin such as fornication, idolatry, or drunkenness is not a Christian (1 Corinthians 6:9-10). The Bible tells us that we cannot fellowship with a person who commits these sins and still professes to be a Christian (1 Corinthians 5:11). The apostle said that in communion we demonstrate that we are one special body (1 Corinthians 10:16-17). Therefore if a person is known to be a careless, unconcerned sinner, he cannot share in that unity.

If a member has sinned and has refused the correction of the church, he is to be considered unsaved (Matthew 18:17), and therefore should not be served communion.

A pastor is responsible to serve communion to Christians, but he is not responsible to investigate every detail of their lives. If a person professes to be a Christian and is not living in open sin, the pastor can accept his testimony.

Every person who is truly saved has received the atonement that the communion represents, whether or not he is a member of a particular local church. Therefore, church membership should not be a requirement for communion.

A true convert qualifies for both communion and baptism. He should not have to wait until after baptism to receive communion.

If a congregation is mixed with a variety of Christians and unsaved people, communion should not be served to the congregation in general. Communion could be scheduled at a different time for those who should receive it.

The Bible does not tell us exactly how often to serve communion.

Sometimes churches that have an informal style of worship do not understand the value of ritual because they want a free style of worship. They need to understand that God has designed this ritual to help them worship.

Some people wrongly place their faith in the ritual. They want to have communion frequently because it helps them to feel that they are saved.

It is important for a pastor to occasionally take time to explain the meaning of communion. He should help his people understand how to use it as a blessing in their relationship with God without trusting in it the wrong way.

The Bible does not make a direct statement that communion should be served only by the pastor. However, Paul gave special directions for serving communion in an orderly and reverent way. The people of the church would naturally depend on the pastor to make sure communion was done properly, and the pastor should take that responsibility.

Ideally, communion should be served by a pastor or someone under the pastor's direction. The pastor can ask others to help him in a communion service. The pastor may also give approval for someone to serve communion to people where the pastor is not present. In a place where a group of believers lacks a person who feels qualified to be called pastor, they still should practice communion, carefully following Scriptural directions.

A Form for Communion

Gathering: There should be an established way of gathering the people who will share communion. If it is done in a public worship service, leaders must know how they will serve the right people.

Scripture: Before communion is served, Scripture should be read. A few statements could be said about the Scripture but should be short. Examples of scripture passages that could be used include Matthew 26:26-30, Mark 15:22-28, Luke 22:14-20, John 10:11-18, John 19:1-6, John 19:16-19, John 20:26-29, 1 Corinthians 11:23-26, Hebrews 10:11-17, Hebrews 9:24-28, Hebrews 4:12-16, Revelation 1:12-18, Isaiah 53:1-5, or Isaiah 53:6-12.

Prayer: Someone should lead in prayer. The prayer should include statements like these: "Lord, we thank you for the salvation you provided by the sacrifice of Jesus. We thank you for the grace that you give us freely. As we share communion together we testify that we depend on you for spiritual life. We demonstrate the unity that we have as believers together. We pray for grace to live pleasing to you."

Distribution of Bread: The bread may be distributed by the pastor or by people he appoints. He may say, "This bread represents the body of Christ, given for our salvation." Everyone should be quiet and reverent throughout the communion time. In some churches, the pastor will ask the people to hold the bread until everyone has received it, then eat it together. In other churches, the custom is for each person to eat the bread when he receives it.

Prayer: The pastor or someone he chooses could lead a short prayer thanking God for His grace.

Distribution of Wine: The pastor may say, "This wine represents the blood of Jesus, given for our salvation." Some churches distribute individual cups. Others pass one cup. At some churches, each person dips his piece of bread into the wine. The important thing is that it be done in an orderly, reverent manner.

Prayer: The pastor or someone he chooses could lead a prayer of worship.

Hymn: The group could sing a hymn together.

Child Dedication Ceremony

The ceremony of child dedication usually occurs in a Sunday worship service. The purposes of the child dedication ceremony are (1) for the pastor to present the child as a member of the family of faith, (2) for parents to testify to the congregation that they intend to raise the child for the glory of God, and (3) for the pastor and congregation to pray for God's grace and help for the parents and child.

Churches in some Christian traditions practice baptism of babies because they believe that the child of Christian parents is already a member of the church. If the child later testifies to faith, the church may have a ceremony that confirms the child as a believer at a certain age. Most evangelical churches do not baptize babies, because baptism is a testimony that the person has been converted and has faith in Christ, which is not possible for a baby. Most evangelical churches practice child dedication instead of infant baptism.

A Form for Child Dedication

Scripture reading by the pastor or someone appointed: Mark 10:13-16 and Matthew 18:1-6.

The pastor should ask the parents to come forward with the child. Other family members such as grandparents and siblings could be included.

Pastor: "Today you are dedicating your child to God. God has declared in his Word that children are his blessing (Psalm 127:3). Children bring joy and give a future to the family. God has also said that every child belongs to him (Ezekiel 18:4). Parents have a sacred responsibility to raise a child for the glory of God." You will need grace and wisdom from God to fulfil your responsibility.

"Do you commit to live a consistent Christian life as an example for your child, teaching the word of God, encouraging a relationship with God, and coming faithfully to the place of worship?"

Parents should answer, "We do."

The pastor should hold the child and pray something similar to the following [changing the gender as necessary]: "Lord, we thank you for the blessing of this child. We dedicate him to you. We pray for his health and protection from harm. We pray that he would come into a saving relationship with you at an early age. We ask you to guide his life, write your word in his heart, help him determine to follow godly influences, and make him a man of God whose life glorifies you."

After the prayer, the pastor could invite the congregation to come forward to congratulate and encourage the parents.

Marriage Ceremony

Preliminary Considerations

The pastor should verify that neither of the candidates for marriage are married to anyone else already and that they have fulfilled any legal requirements. The best situation is for the couple to be married in the context of the local church that will be their spiritual family. A pastor should make sure the couple has had counseling in preparation for marriage and that they understand that they are making a lifetime commitment. The lessons about marriage in the course *Christian Family* are useful for counseling before marriage.

Some people delay marriage because their culture expects marriage to be an elaborate, expensive ceremony. For some couples, the expense of their wedding hurts them financially for long afterward because they spend everything they have and even borrow money for the wedding event. The church should be a community of faith that provides a different model of marriage. Christian marriage is for a man and woman who are committed to each other and to God and should not require great expense that delays the wedding or hurts the couple's future. The pastor should encourage simplicity.

Marriage Ceremony

Besides the details included here, a marriage can include other parts such as a sermon, songs, other speeches, lighting candles, a kiss, etc.

Usually the ceremony begins with a procession that brings all of the participants to their places for the ceremony.

The pastor reads the following:

"We are gathered today before God and this congregation to join name and name together in marriage. In the book of Genesis we read of God's institution of marriage. God said, "It is not good for man to be alone; I will make a helper fit for him." We are told that a man will leave his father and mother and hold to his wife. The Apostle Paul said that marriage is honorable. Because God has designed marriage to be permanent, it is the greatest human commitment possible other than our devotion to God."

The pastor or an appointed person prays a prayer that could include details from this example:

"Father, we thank you for your direction and grace that have brought this couple to this place of commitment. We pray for your blessing on this marriage. May they be united in spirit and in their dedication to your will in all things. May their home be a place of peace and joy where grace is demonstrated. We pray that you would bless them with children and that they would raise their children to glorify you. We pray that you would provide their needs and that in times of difficulty and trial they will be firm in love for each other and faithfulness to you. Bless the church as their spiritual family that gives them encouragement, counsel, and help. May you be eternally glorified by the life that

follows the vows that are spoken today. In Jesus' name we pray, amen."

The father of the bride stands ready to present the bride to the groom.

The pastor asks, "Who gives this woman to be married to this man?"

The father answers, "I do."

The pastor speaks to the groom, asking by name,

"Do you take this woman to be your wife, to have and to hold from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, reserving yourself only for her until you are separated by death, according to God's holy Word?

The groom should answer, "I do."

The pastor speaks to the bride, asking by name,

"Do you take this man to be your husband, to have and to hold from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, reserving yourself only for him until you are separated by death, according to God's holy Word?

The bride should answer, "I do."

The couple should join hands.

The pastor should say the following words for the groom to repeat, a few words at a time.

I, _____(name)_____, take you, _____(name)_____, to be my wife; and I promise before God and these witnesses to be your loving and faithful husband in abundance and in lack, in joy and in sorrow, in sickness and in health, as long as we both shall live.

The pastor should say the following words for the bride to repeat, a few words at a time.

I, _____(name)_____, take you, _____(name)_____, to be my husband; and I promise before God and these witnesses to be your loving and faithful husband in abundance and in lack, in joy and in sorrow, in sickness and in health, as long as we both shall live.

The pastor or someone appointed should pray for the couple.

After the prayer, the pastor says to the congregation, "I present to you Mr. and Mrs. _____(names)_____"

Funeral Ceremony

These scriptures are useful for funeral services: John 11:25-26, 1 Corinthians 15:50-58, 2 Corinthians 5:5-10, Psalm 90, I Thessalonians 4:13-18, Hebrews 11:5, James 4:13-15, 2 Timothy 4:7-8, Revelation 14:13, and 2 Timothy 1:9-10. A pastor should be careful not to use a scripture in a way that implies that a person was a faithful Christian when it was obvious that he was not.

In a funeral for an unbeliever or a person who was obviously living in sin, the pastor should not pretend that the person went to heaven. That gives false assurance to the sinners who hear it and makes them think that at death they will be accepted by God even if they have not repented. However, it is not necessary for the pastor to make critical statements about the person who died. The pastor should simply preach biblical truth.

In the case of a person who lived a sinful life and did not seem to be saved before death, if someone asks, "Was this person saved?" or "Is he in heaven?" the pastor could answer this way: "Anyone who is saved is saved by grace. We can hope that before his death he prayed for grace and forgiveness. He is in the hands of a merciful God. We have the responsibility to live faithfully and be ready for the time when we stand before God."

If a person was converted shortly before he died, the pastor could observe that after conversion and now in eternity the person wishes he had repented and lived for God sooner. This is a message to the listeners to encourage them to be saved rather than waiting until near death.

For any funeral, it is appropriate for the pastor to talk about the comfort and help that God gives to the family.

In a funeral for a child, the pastor should assure the family that a child who dies goes to heaven.

The funeral of an obvious believer should have an aspect of celebration that the person glorified God with his life and testimony and ended in victory.

The pastor's prayers during the funeral should focus on (1) praise to God for the grace that was shown in the person's life and (2) prayer for comfort of the family and friends.

Ordination Ceremony

Announcement to Congregation

Today we are ordaining pastors for the work of the ministry. Ordination is the confirmation of the church that God has called and gifted certain ones to devote themselves to the pastoral ministry and that they have responded to the call with commitment and preparation.

Scripture Readings

These should be assigned to various leaders who are present. The one directing the service may tell them they should read the scripture without adding exhortation.

1 Timothy 3:1-7 (Character of a pastor)

2 Tim. 4:1-8 (Work of a pastor)

1 Timothy 4:6-16 (Pastor's development and focus)

Introduction of Candidates

Today we present for ordination (name) and (name). They have been well-recommended and approved for their devotion to God, character of life, and faithful ministry.

The certificate of ordination states that we ordain these pastors "In recognition of the call and anointing of God, the necessary gifts and abilities for ministry, fulfillment of biblical requirements, adherence to biblical doctrine, demonstration of commitment to the work of a spiritual shepherd, and obedience to the New Testament command to 'Study to show thyself approved unto God.'"

Sermon

The sermon is addressed especially to the candidates. It should be preached by a pastor with long and respected ministry.

The sermon should be on a subject relating to the call and responsibility of ministry or the mission of the church or something similar.

Ordination Ceremony with Questions

The leader should ask the candidates to come stand with him to be asked several questions. They should answer each question with "I do."

"Pastor (name) and Pastor (name),

"Do you commit to a ministry of preaching the Word of God, and to require for salvation and godly living only what is taught there?

"Do you commit to a life of prayer and Bible study and other disciplines that will develop you spiritually and equip you for ministry?"

"Do you commit to follow holiness and godly living and to lead your family and congregation to do likewise with God's help?

"Do you commit to care for the people of your congregation and to encourage unity and cooperation among all churches that follow God's Word?

Laying on of Hands and Prayer

The candidates kneel as the leader and any other ordained pastors present lay hands on each in turn, while one pastor prays for God's anointing and blessing of each candidate.

Standing for Certificate Presentation

"Reverend (name), we affirm your authority as a minister in the church of God."

Congratulation by Congregation

At this time the people of the congregation come past to congratulate the newly ordained pastors.

Closing Hymn

Benediction

Form for Annual Pastor's Report

Report for Conference Year _____

Name _____

Phone _____

Email _____

Church Name _____

Church Location _____

Position _____

Number of sermons preached _____

Please describe studies you completed this year such as books, courses, or seminars.

Please list ministry activities such as baptisms, child dedications, communion, marriages, evangelism, Christian school work, and teaching of groups. Use additional paper if needed.

Application for Association Membership

Name _____

Phone _____

Email _____

Church Name _____

Church Location _____

Position _____

Briefly describe your conversion and give an approximate date.

How long have you been at your current church?

Describe your role in your local church (if you are not the senior pastor).

Describe any ministry training program you have experienced.

Have you carefully read the Manual of the Association?

Do you agree with the doctrines and requirements of the Manual and commit to support them with your behavior and communications?